Angner Reyes

September 26, 2010

WRT105

Analysis Essay(Intro)

A man with arm sold out concerts around the world. Def Leppard’s drummer Rick Allen is that man. In their 2008 tour he rocked out stadiums and played his heart out, with one arm. A photo taken by Mathew Becker at Winnipeg, Manitoba shows Rick Allen throwing a thumb up to the crowd after the concert was done. This photo challenges the way people perceive disability. Rick Allen is just as abled as anyone and has the power to make thousands headbang to his music. His passion and courage create beauty by attracting us to his being. People stare at him because he amazes everyone with his ability to do things that “normal” people can’t. Rick Allen reassigns meaning to a drummer and what a drummer should look like.

“…It was the seatbelt that actually came across my chest and severed my arm.”(*Fighting Back).* A dreadful car accident in 1984 is what caused Rick Allen to lose his arm and become disabled. 24 years later Rick Allen looks happier than ever to be playing music on stage,



this photo embodies how strong and beautiful Rick Allen’s life has become after his accident.

Scarry’s theory of beauty in disability challenges what society sees as beautiful. “It is not that beauty attracts us per se but rather that by attracting us something becomes beauty.”(Garland Thomson, p.200). Rick Allen attracts people’s attention, Rick Allen becomes beautiful because people look at him. Rick Allen’s disability doesn’t hinder his ability to play the drums, he earned the nickname “Thunder God”, all this with a missing arm. His missing arm is what’s beautiful, Rick has made his disability into an inspiration to keep moving forward and play music no matter what got in his way. The way Rick smiles in the photo, the way he can be so free and express his happiness to the crowd with one arm is beautiful.

“…The question for starers is not whether we *should* stare, but rather *how* we should stare. The question for the starees is not whether we *will* be stared at but rather *how* we will be stared at.”(Garland Thomson, p.199). Disabled people get stared at all the time and Rick Allen is no exception. Rick Allen had a hard time accepting that he was disabled, he didn’t belive it at first and had to really look at himself and accept who he was. “He has to face himself, he still has to look in the mirror, he still has to like himself.”(Stacy Allen). Rick Allen’s wife Stacy said this quote during his *Fighting Back* special on television. Stacy creating the feelings and problems Rick had to go through in order to except his disability for what it was. As Rick Allen said, “At first I found it difficult to listen to music…umm because I was constantly reminded of what I used to be able to do and I felt as though I couldn’t really do it anymore.”(*Fighting Back*), Rick Allen was caught up on what he used to be because he didn’t want to be seen as the ex-drummer of Def Leppard. “*How we will be stared at”* , This is what Rick Allen dealt with *how* people would see him on stage with one arm and *how* people will react to him playing again with one arm.

Simi Linton wrote about her theory on “reassigning meaning” to disability in our society. Rick Allen does the same, but he reassigns meaning to a drummer. He drums like any “normal” person would, but he’s not normal according to society. He is disabled, but he makes it seemingly unnoticeable when playing the drums. This is why Rick Allen changes what a drummer should look like, he challenges society’s limitations to disabled people and surpasses it beyond any measure. He takes his disability and makes it something incredible for thousands of people who watch him play; his passion, courage, and strong will are what reassign the meaning to what a drummer really is.

Rick Allen has lived a great life with and without his arm. The photo captures a disability that is non-existent in spirit. To anyone the missing arm will be something that just seems something to feel pity for, but seeing Rick Allen’s joy through his smile in the photo shows how happy he is with his life and that he is living with his disability without a problem. He challenges what society sees as disability and makes it into a rock hard album.